

## Chris O'Brien

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**From:** Brian Daniels <bdaniels@rileague.org>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 23, 2021 11:45 AM  
**To:** House Finance Committee  
**Subject:** League Testimony - H 5062 et al  
**Attachments:** H5062 etc Tst-School Funding Bills 03221.pdf

Please find the League of Cities and Towns' combined written testimony in support of numerous education bills in House Finance Committee today:

- H 5062 – The Rhode Island Early Childhood Innovation Act
- H 5208 – Paul W. Crowley Student Investment Initiative
- H 5211 – Rhode Island Quality Enhancement in Afterschool and Out-of-School Time Act
- H 5450 – Distressed Community Child Enrichment Program
- H 6029 – Relating to Education, Categorical Programs, State Funded Expenses
- H 6030 -- Relating to Education – Health and Safety of Pupils
- H 6031 -- Relating to Education – Residence of Children for School Purposes
- H 6140 -- Relating to Education – Residence of Children for School Purposes

Thank you for your assistance in distributing this to committee members.

Best regards,  
Brian

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Testimony from Brian M. Daniels, Executive Director  
H 5062 – The Rhode Island Early Childhood Innovation Act  
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H 6030 – Relating to Education – Health and Safety of Pupils  
H 6031 – Relating to Education – Residence of Children for School Purposes  
H 6140 – Relating to Education – Residence of Children for School Purposes  
House Committee on Finance – March 23, 2021

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, for the opportunity to submit testimony. The League of Cities and Towns appreciates the General Assembly's commitment to the funding formula for the last ten years.

Today the Committee is hearing numerous bills that would provide additional funds for early childhood and elementary and secondary education – whether by enhancing services for at-risk children, expanding afterschool programs, supporting educator professional development or providing additional funding for student transportation. We are particularly appreciative of efforts to address the local funding impacts of youths in the care of the Department of Children, Youth and Families (H 6031, H 6140) – a perennial challenge that can have significant budget implications in our communities. We recognize the challenges that many cities and towns face in providing sufficient funding for education, and we appreciate the committee's careful review of these bills.

The education funding formula has increased state aid to education, improved student outcomes and slowed property tax growth. With FY 2021 the tenth and final year of the formula, we encourage General Assembly to maintain its commitment to education while making some needed improvements.

- **Improve budget certainty** – School districts can see major increases or decreases in their state education funding from year to year. The state should smooth any decreases while being more responsive to new costs.
- **Increase state pension contribution for teachers** – Rhode Island covers only 40% of the employer portion of teacher pensions, with local government covering the remaining 60%. Four other New England states cover 100% of the costs, and we urge Rhode Island to increase its share.
- **Fully support essential “categorical” programs** – Cities and towns are struggling with the high costs of special education and transportation, which have not been funded at appropriate levels. The state should also encourage efficiency by increasing regional school bonuses.

The League believes that we must work collaboratively with many stakeholders to sustain and build on recent education improvements in a comprehensive fashion. We thank you for your consideration of our views.

Hello, My name is Nick Callahan and I am an 11th grader at East Greenwich High School. I am in support of the removal of School Resource Officers in Providence Public Schools.

I stand with the efforts of the Providence Alliance for Student Safety (PASS) to terminate the contract between the Providence Police Department and the Providence Public School District. The coalition and students in the greater Providence community have been asking for this action for over 3 years, and now more than ever it is important that we take this transformative step. I stand in solidarity with PASS and their Counselors not Cops campaign because I believe that all students should have the right to safe, healthy, and equitable schools.

There is no conclusive evidence that School Resource Officers make our schools any safer. Instead, the presence of SRO's has only been shown to lead to higher rates of suspensions, expulsions, and arrests. These punitive actions disproportionately impact Black and Brown students, LGBTQ+ students, and disabled students. In Providence Public Schools, the vast majority of arrests (about 92%) were of students of color. Black students make up 16% of overall PPSD enrollment and 30% of all student arrests. Nationally, Black students are arrested at a rate 3 times that of white students. In some states, they are 8 times as likely to be arrested. There are also over dozens of documented and, even more undocumented, incidents in the past decade in which School Resource Officers have tasered, pepper sprayed, injured and used force on students to enact physical harm. All forms of violence, and criminalization of students must be stopped.

Real safe, healthy and equitable schools promote and prioritize the mental health and well being of students through counselors, nurses and other social, emotional and physical health providers. Schools that employ these services see improved attendance rates, lower rates of suspensions and other disciplinary incidents, improved school safety and higher graduation rates. Without police in the halls.

It's time that the Rhode Island Department of Education actually listens to, and acts towards a future that is truly equitable and safe for all of their students and their educational environments. #PoliceFreeSchools now.

In solidarity,  
Nick Callahan

Sources:

<https://www.aclu.org/report/cops-and-no-counselors>

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